

I CLAIM:

1. A method for providing highly automated procurement services, comprising the steps of:
  - (a) accessing a database initialized with information regarding a plurality of trading partners:
    - (1) said plurality of trading partners including customer and non-customer trading partners;
    - (2) said information including trading relationship information involving at least a customer trading partner and another of said trading partners;
  - (b) receiving a purchase request of a first trading partner among said trading partners;
  - (c) automatically selecting at least one qualified trading partner from said trading partners based on said purchase request;
  - (d) generating a purchase order based on:
    - (1) a portion of said trading relationship information pertaining to said at least one qualified trading partner; and
    - (2) said purchase request;
  - (e) forwarding said purchase order to said at least one qualified trading partner;
  - (f) receiving a notification pertaining to said at least one qualified trading partner; and
  - (g) automatically processing said notification, including forwarding said notification to said first trading partner.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein said step (a) further includes:
  - (1) establishing terms and conditions with at least one of said plurality of trading partners; and
  - (2) storing said terms and conditions into said database.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein said step (a) further includes:
  - (1) establishing a purchase forecast with at least one of said plurality of trading partners; and

- (2) storing said purchase forecast into said database.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein said step (a) further includes:
- (1) establishing business rules; and
  - (2) storing said business rules into said database.
5. The method of claim 4, wherein said business rules include rules for allocating said purchase order among said at least one qualified trading partners.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein said step (b) further includes:
- (1) prompting said first trading partner to provide identity verification information; and
  - (2) receiving said purchase request after said first trading partner has been successfully verified.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein said step (c) further includes:
- (1) determining a business project identification associated with said purchase request;
  - (2) reviewing information associated with said business project identification in said database; and
  - (3) selecting at least one qualified trading partner based at least in part on said reviewing.
8. The method of claim 1, wherein said step (f) further includes:
- (1) prompting said at least one qualified trading partner to provide identity verification information; and
  - (2) receiving said notification after said at least one qualified trading partner has been successfully verified.
9. The method of claim 1, wherein said step (f) further includes:
- (1) receiving an escalation process request; and
  - (2) resolving said escalation process request.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein said step (2) includes the steps of:
  - (A) requesting a negotiation with at least one of said first trading partner and said at least one qualified trading partner; and
  - (B) forwarding an outcome of said requested negotiation to at least another of said first trading partner and said at least one qualified trading partner.
11. The method of claim 1, wherein:
  - (1) said notification in said step (f) is an acknowledgment of said purchase order; and
  - (2) said step (g) includes automatically forwarding said acknowledgment to said first trading partner.
12. The method of claim 1, wherein:
  - (1) said notification in said step (f) is a shipment notice; and
  - (2) said step (g) includes:
    - (A) automatically forwarding said shipment notice to said first trading partner; and
    - (B) automatically creating an accounts payable file and an account receivable file based on said shipment notice.
13. The method of claim 12, further comprising the steps of:
  - (h) generating an invoice based on said accounts receivable file;
  - (i) forwarding said invoice to said first trading partner;
  - (j) receiving payment from said first trading partner based on said invoice; and
  - (k) recording said payment in an accounts receivable database.
14. The method of claim 12, further comprising the steps of:
  - (h) calculating payment to said at least one qualified trading partner based on said accounts payable file;
  - (i) forwarding said payment to said at least one qualified trading partner; and

- (j) recording said payment in an accounts payable database.
15. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
- (h) receiving a change order request of at least one of said first trading partner and said at least one qualified trading partner;
  - (i) automatically forwarding said change order request to another of said first trading partner and said at least one qualified trading partner;
  - (j) receiving an escalation process request;
  - (k) resolving said escalation process request.
16. The method of claim 15, wherein said step (k) further includes:
- (1) requesting a negotiation with said trading partner to whom said change order request is forwarded; and
  - (2) forwarding an outcome of said requested negotiation to said trading partner of whom said change order request is received.
17. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
- (h) receiving purchase forecast information of said first trading partner;
  - (i) automatically forwarding said purchase forecast information to said at least one qualified trading partner; and
  - (j) storing said purchase forecast information in said database.
18. The method of claim 17, further comprising the steps of:
- (k) receiving an escalation process request; and
  - (l) resolving said escalation process request.
19. The method of claim 18, wherein said step (l) further includes:
- (1) requesting a negotiation with at least one of said first trading partner and said at least one qualified trading partner based on said escalation process request; and

- (2) forwarding an outcome of said requested negotiation to at least another of said first trading partner and said at least one qualified trading partner.

20. A method for providing highly automated procurement services, comprising the steps of:

- (a) accessing a database initialized with information regarding a plurality of trading partners:
  - (1) said plurality of trading partners including customer and non-customer trading partners;
  - (2) said information including trading relationship information involving at least a customer trading partner and another of said trading partners;
- (b) receiving a purchase request of a first trading partner among said trading partners;
- (c) automatically selecting at least one qualified trading partner from said trading partners based on said information and said purchase request;
- (d) generating a purchase order based on said purchase request;
- (e) forwarding said purchase order to said at least one qualified trading partner;
- (f) receiving a notification pertaining to said at least one qualified trading partner; and
- (g) automatically processing said notification, including forwarding said notification to said first trading partner.

21. A system for providing highly automated procurement services, comprising:

- (a) a database initialized with information regarding a plurality of trading partners;
  - (1) said plurality of trading partners including customer and non-customer trading partners;
  - (2) said information including trading relationship information involving at least a customer trading partner and another of said trading partners; and

- (b) a computer system coupled to communications devices of said plurality of trading partners via a set of connection networks:
  - (1) said computer system being coupled to said computer database;
  - (2) said computer system being configured to receive a purchase request of a first trading partner among said plurality of trading partners;
  - (3) said computer system being configured to generate a purchase order based on said information and said purchase request;
  - (4) said computer system being configured to automatically forward said purchase order to at least one qualified trading partner selected from said trading partners based on said purchase request;
  - (5) said computer system being configured to received a notification from said at least one qualified trading partner; and
  - (6) said computer system being configured to automatically process said notification.

22. The system of claim 21, where said computer system is configured to forward said notification to said first trading partner.

22. The system of claim 21, wherein said information includes terms and conditions with at least one of said plurality of trading partners.

23. The system of claim 21, wherein said information includes purchase forecast information from at least one of said plurality of trading partners.

24. The system of claim 21, wherein information includes business rules.

25. The system of claim 24, wherein said business rules include rules for allocating said purchase order among said at least one qualified trading partners.

26. The system of claim 21, wherein said computer system is:

- (1) configured to determine a business project identification associated with said purchase request;

- (2) configured to review information associated with said business project identification in said database; and
  - (3) configured to select at least one qualified trading partner based at least in part on said review.
- 27. The system of claim 21, wherein said computer system is:
  - (1) configured to receive an escalation process request; and
  - (2) configured to resolve said escalation process request.
- 28. The system of claim 21, wherein said notification is an acknowledgment of said purchase order.
- 29. The system of claim 21, wherein said notification is a shipment notice.
- 30. The system of claim 29, wherein said computer system is further configured to automatically create an accounts payable file and an account receivable file based on said shipment notice.
- 31. The system of claim 30, further includes an accounts receivable database, wherein said computer system is:
  - (h) configured to generate an invoice based on said accounts receivable file;
  - (i) configured to forward said invoice to said first trading partner;
  - (j) configured to receive payment from said first trading partner based on said invoice; and
  - (k) configured to record said payment in said accounts receivable database.
- 32. The system of claim 30, further includes an accounts payable database, wherein said computer system is:
  - (h) configured to calculate payment to said at least one qualified trading partner based on said accounts payable file;
  - (i) configured to forward said payment to said at least one qualified trading partner; and

- (j) configured to record said payment in said accounts payable database.

33. The system of claim 21, wherein said computer system is:

- (h) configured to receive a change order request of at least one of said first trading partner and said at least one qualified trading partner;
- (i) configured to automatically forward said change order request to another of said first trading partner and said at least one qualified trading partner;
- (j) configured to receive an escalation process request; and
- (k) configured to resolve said escalation process request.

34. The system of claim 21, wherein said computer system is:

- (h) configured to receive purchase forecast information of said first trading partner;
- (i) configured to automatically forward said purchase forecast information to said at least one qualified trading partner; and
- (j) configured to store said purchase forecast information in said database.

35. The system of claim 34, wherein said computer system is:

- (k) configured to receive an escalation process request; and
- (l) configured to resolve said escalation process request.

36. A computer program product for providing highly automated procurement services, comprising:

- (a) logic code for accessing a database initialized with information regarding a plurality of trading partners:
  - (1) said plurality of trading partners including customer and non-customer trading partners;
  - (2) said information including trading relationship information involving at least a customer trading partner and another of said trading partners;
- (b) logic code for receiving a purchase request of a first trading partner among said trading partners;



- (c) logic code for automatically selecting at least one qualified trading partner from said trading partners based on said purchase request;
  - (d) logic code for generating a purchase order based on:
    - (1) a portion of said trading relationship information pertaining to said at least one qualified trading partner; and
    - (2) said purchase request;
  - (e) logic code for forwarding said purchase order to said at least one qualified trading partner;
  - (f) logic code for receiving a notification pertaining to said at least one qualified trading partner; and
  - (g) logic code for automatically processing said notification, including forwarding said notification to said first trading partner.
37. The computer program product of claim 36, wherein said (c) further includes:
- (1) logic code for determining a business project identification associated with said purchase request;
  - (2) logic code for reviewing information associated with said business project identification in said database; and
  - (3) logic code for selecting at least one qualified trading partner based at least in part on said reviewing.
38. The computer program product of claim 36, wherein said (f) further includes:
- (1) logic code for receiving an escalation process request; and
  - (2) logic code for resolving said escalation process request.
39. The computer program product of claim 36, further comprising:
- (h) logic code for receiving a change order request of at least one of said first trading partner and said at least one qualified trading partner;
  - (i) logic code for automatically forwarding said change order request to another of said first trading partner and said at least one qualified trading partner;
  - (j) logic code for receiving an escalation process request; and
  - (k) logic code for resolving said escalation process request.

40. The computer program product of claim 39, further comprising:
  - (h) logic code for receiving purchase forecast information of said first trading partner;
  - (i) logic code for automatically forwarding said purchase forecast information to said at least one qualified trading partner; and
  - (j) logic code for storing said purchase forecast information in said database.
  
41. A computer program product for providing highly automated procurement services, comprising:
  - (a) logic code for accessing a database initialized with information regarding a plurality of trading partners:
    - (1) said plurality of trading partners including customer and non-customer trading partners;
    - (2) said information including trading relationship information involving at least a customer trading partner and another of said trading partners;
  - (b) logic code for receiving a purchase request of a first trading partner among said trading partners;
  - (c) logic code for automatically selecting at least one qualified trading partner from said trading partners based on said information and said purchase request;
  - (d) logic code for generating a purchase order based on said purchase request;
  - (e) logic code for forwarding said purchase order to said at least one qualified trading partner;
  - (f) logic code for receiving a notification pertaining to said at least one qualified trading partner; and
  - (g) logic code for automatically processing said notification, including forwarding said notification to said first trading partner.
  
42. A computer system for providing highly automated procurement services, comprising:

- (a) means for accessing a database initialized with information regarding a plurality of trading partners:
    - (1) said plurality of trading partners including customer and non-customer trading partners;
    - (2) said information including trading relationship information involving at least a customer trading partner and another of said trading partners;
  - (b) means for receiving a purchase request of a first trading partner among said trading partners;
  - (c) means for automatically selecting at least one qualified trading partner from said trading partners based on said purchase request;
  - (d) means for generating a purchase order based on:
    - (1) a portion of said trading relationship information pertaining to said at least one qualified trading partner; and
    - (2) said purchase request;
  - (e) means for forwarding said purchase order to said at least one qualified trading partner;
  - (f) means for receiving a notification pertaining to said at least one qualified trading partner; and
  - (g) means for automatically processing said notification, including forwarding said notification to said first trading partner.
43. The computer system of claim 42, wherein said (c) further includes:
- (1) means for determining a business project identification associated with said purchase request;
  - (2) means for reviewing information associated with said business project identification in said database; and
  - (3) means for selecting at least one qualified trading partner based at least in part on said reviewing.
44. The computer system of claim 42, wherein said (f) further includes:
- (1) means for receiving an escalation process request; and
  - (2) means for resolving said escalation process request.

45. The computer system of claim 42, further comprising:
- (h) means for receiving a change order request of at least one of said first trading partner and said at least one qualified trading partner;
  - (i) means for automatically forwarding said change order request to another of said first trading partner and said at least one qualified trading partner;
  - (j) means for receiving an escalation process request; and
  - (k) means for resolving said escalation process request.
46. The computer system of claim 42, further comprising:
- (h) means for receiving purchase forecast information of said first trading partner;
  - (i) means for automatically forwarding said purchase forecast information to said at least one qualified trading partner; and
  - (j) means for storing said purchase forecast information in said database.

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